

## Garden Line - April 2010

by Brent Moon - HPARD Urban Garden Manager

Things should really be kicking along out in your garden by now. Temperatures are warming up and sunny days are at hand! April usually brings the last of our nice days before the real summer heat and humidity sets in, so take advantage of these days to get any last minute projects done before it becomes unbearable out there.



Many common pests rear their ugly heads now; insects dig the warm weather. Watch for aphids, cutworms, spider mites, as well as squash vine borers. About the only way to control squash vine borers is to plant resistant varieties or to apply Bt (*Bacillus thuringiensis*), a naturally occurring organism, to the vines. It has been my observation that squash is tough to grow here, at least for me. You might have better luck. The old variety of yellow squash (Yellow Crookneck) seems especially susceptible to the squash vine borer. Some resistant varieties include Tatume, Tahitian, and Calabaza.

Make sure you keep up with fertilizing your veggies. If you planted tomatoes, peppers, eggplants, and the like last month, it's probably time to side dress with some fertilizer to keep them growing strong. Remember not to go too heavily on the nitrogen or you'll get big, beautiful foliage and very little fruit.





If, like me, you are into growing tropical plants such as cannas, elephant ears, and bananas, you should really see them start to take off this month. All of these love moisture and fertilizer so don't skimp if you want the best growth out of them.



Speaking of bananas, I grow several fruiting types in my landscape. Fruit is obtainable in our area if you select the correct cultivars (a technical term that is simply short for cultivated variety) and can protect them somewhat through the winter. Look for the following cultivars for our area: 'Orinoco', 'Dwarf Orinoco', 'Raja Puri', 'Ice Cream', and 'Dwarf Brazilian'. For more information on growing bananas, go to [www.bananas.org](http://www.bananas.org), the home page of the International Banana Society

Growing fruit is very popular in our area, as witnessed by the huge success of several fruit tree sales over the past couple of months. A plethora of fruit can be grown in Houston, including citrus, figs, grapes, blackberries, persimmons, strawberries, blueberries (with some soil modification), Barbados cherry, Pineapple guava, loquats, pomegranates, etc. Some are even having success with avocado, guava, and mango. Be sure to do your research, as some of these are only marginally hardy here. For a great resource on fruits and veggies for the Houston area, check out Dr. Bob Randall's book *Year Round Vegetables, Fruits, and Flowers for Metro Houston*. It is available through Urban Harvest [www.urbanharvest.org](http://www.urbanharvest.org), as well as several local nurseries, such as Wabash and Buchanan's.

